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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.









LIFE AND ADVENTURES

OF

John Gaskins,

IN THE

EARLY HISTORY OF NORTHWEST

ARKANSAS.

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**True Tales by an Old Hunter**

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PRINTED AND FOR SALE BY THE AUTHOR

EUREKA SPRINGS, ARKANSAS.



LIFE AND ADVENTURES  
OF  
JOHN GASKINS,  
IN THE  
EARLY HISTORY OF NORTHWEST  
ARKANSAS.



JOHN GASKINS.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

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### THE DISCOVERY OF EUREKA SPRINGS.

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As I was one of the first settlers in the country, living along the creek three miles below Eureka Springs for thirty-eight years, I will tell something about the discovery of that place.

I had hunted all over these mountains—killed bears and panthers and many other wild animals in nearly every gulch or cave in that vicinity. I have killed nine bears in the hollow near the Dairy Spring and many deer, for that was always a good place for them. My regular stopping place was the Rock House, or cave, above the Basin Spring in which Alvah Jackson camped on his hunting trips. We often camped there, using the Basin water for our coffee never imagining it was more than pure water, until Uncle Alvah camped there with them. They simply dipped the water up from the little basin.

Then Uncle Alvah began to use the water for other diseases, finding that it was beneficial. He induced Judge Sanders and Mr. Whitson to go there in the

summer of '79. Then others began to come and were cured and benefitted, the whole sides of the mountains were covered with tents.

I was there every day, watching and wondering. The people crowded around the Basin spring (that being the only spring at first, though in a short time others were discovered) dipping up the water that poured down over the rock into the little basin, one waiting for another.

I would watch for hours, wondering how it could be that I had used the water so long and now to see the crowds gathering there for the cure of all kinds of diseases. Many who were not able to walk would use the water and be able in two or three weeks to climb the mountains, at that time steep and rugged and without roads. Wagons would turn over in trying to drive too near the springs. Once on the bench of the mountains they would take off the wheels, and let the axles rest on the ground. Then tents and afterwards houses were erected.

One incident that happened that summer impressed me with solemn thoughts. For lack of a house a great many people gathered under the trees one Sunday to hear the preacher. A rain came up and we all retired to the rock house. As I listened to a good sermon and saw the preacher laying his book on the rock where I had so often set my coffee pot,

my mind ran back to the many times I had camped here, to times when the scream of the panther or the growl of the bear mingled with that of my dogs in fight. Little did I think then that afterward I would sit there and hear the voice of the man of God echoing among those rocks. I was convinced that the all-wise Creator had not made those mountains and valleys merely for the wild beasts.

People kept pouring in, and in the fall and winter of 1879 my house was always full of sick and helpless people who had no shelter. We could never turn them away, and many times my wife and I had to give up our own bed.

One miraculous cure I remember was that of a young man who was brought helpless to my house by his father. He had rheumatism and had to be carried in from the wagon. He drank freely from the keg of Basin water we had at the house, and then his father took him on to town the next day and bathed him in the water two or three times a day. In one week they came driving back and the boy was sitting up in the seat and could get around very well. The old gentleman started on to his Missouri home with his son and a barrel of Basin water.

There was one lady who had a cancer on her face and had spent many dollars for relief. Finally she came to Eureka Springs, camping in a small tent just

above the Basin. One morning I went there where several people had gathered and found the lady shouting: "I am well, I am well; I came to die but I will get well; thank God." Within three weeks her cancer had come out by the roots and she had it in her bottle half filled with alcohol, and she took it with her when she returned to her home in Indiana. She did not boil the water, she said, but used it from the spring just as God gave it.

The town built up rapidly without much form or improvement on streets until after Governor Clayton located here, and through his influence and energy the town soon had a railroad and passable streets, and then the springs were improved and the streets fixed, adding much to the looks and comforts of the place. Now it is one of the most picturesque towns to be found in the state, and is visited both for health and pleasure. The town has many magnificent buildings and substantial enterprises, including the Sanitarium company, which has grounds near Eureka Springs and is doing much in the way of improvements. The beautiful scenery in every in every direction fills the visitor with astonishment not to be described with the pen.

In conclusion I will say that the happiest days of my life were spent here in the mountains of north Arkansas, where the mild climate is conducive to the

nealth of man and beast; where game was so abundant that I could always have plenty of nice meat in my house without depending on hogs or cattle, which I have to do now, and with close economy, too. Then I could roam freely with my dogs and gun over the mountains, enjoying it to the fullest extent until the war broke out, when my troubles began.

I was called to help raise the confederate flag and refused to do it, telling them I thought it was **not** right to raise any flag except the stars and stripes **for** which our grandfathers had fought, and **which** had given us our liberty and our homes.

Not long after that the conscript law **came in force** and I was given notice to join the **Southern ranks**. I could not do it and had to leave the **country, going** with several others to Ozark, Missouri, **where** the United States flag was floating. With three of my sons I was enlisted into the service. I had left my wife and small children behind. All of my stock was driven off by men who did not belong to either army and did not care where they got their spoils—sixty head of cattle, twenty head of horses, and probably a hundred head of hogs.

My house was pillaged of everything except what my wife and children wore. Hearing of the destitution of my family I came back and took them to Greene county, Missouri, stopping near Springfield, where

I remained until after the war was over. Then I went back to my desolated home, and found that my house had been burned and my farm laid waste. But I was no worse off than my neighbors, and went to work again, and raised a good crop that year, which enabled us to live. In the fall I went to hunting and soon had plenty of meat. In a few years I was getting along very well again, when the surveyors came through my farm and wanted a right of way for a railroad. I was reminded of a conversation I had had with Squire Beaver years before.

“Gaskin,,” says he, “some day this valley will be a public highway, where the stage coach will run, and in time there will be a railroad, for this is the only opening through. You and I may not live to see it, but it will come some day in the future.” And now his words were being verified.

I let them have their right of way, by them making me a good many promises which they fulfilled, making a switch just below my house which they named Gaskins. And I have never failed to get my pass over the road, and will as long as I live. My farm was almost ruined with the railroad running through the best part of it, so I sold out there, buying a place three miles east of Eureka Springs, where I am still living and enjoying very good health, never having an ache or pain from my exposure when I was running

over these mountains hunting for so many years, and in all kinds of weather, which goes to prove that this is the healthiest place in the world, if a man will only stick to it.

I will say that I am a member of the G. A. R. and belong to Lyon Post, No. 6, Eureka Springs, Arkansas. I have always voted for a republican president, casting my first vote for William Henry Harrison in 1840. I have raised all my boys to vote as I did and do and my girls have married good Union men.

If all the members of the G. A. R. had done that we might be ahead today. When Benjamin Harrison was last a candidate for president, I was enabled with my sons and sons-in-law and grand sons to cast twenty votes for him. I say to all, stand firm, for I believe that the true source will prevail.

I was proud of my mother state during the rebellion for many of my brothers and relatives went out fighting hard to save the union, many of them giving up their lives.

I believe that Benjamin Harrison and James G. Blaine were two of the solidest men we had in the government, and why should my native state go back on them? There are some little fellows who believe they have downed the strongest party in the government, and maybe they have, but when you strike a man's pocketbook you get next to his heart. But

they are coming and will need protection, too if I am not mistaken.

I know my days are almost numbered, and I do not expect to ever vote for another president, but if I do I will vote as I have always done.

I want to add that I believe we are raising boys here at Eureka Springs on this pure water who will have the brains for presidents. I often tell people that I have made it possible for them to raise children here by killing the bears and other wild animals. Now in my old days I have the pleasure of seeing so many nice healthy children that I feel repaid for all I have gone through, and sincerely hope that my efforts to make this book interesting will not be in vain.

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#### SOMETHING ABOUT BEARS.

I have spent thirty years of my life in hunting and killing bears, and will give my experience of their nature and habits.

The bear is the most formidable animal I have had to contend with, it has more sense than any other wild animal I have seen. I have killed over two hundred of them, and was never hurt by one, though I have had many narrow escapes. In most cases they will try to get away from you, and, if not crowded, will go for miles without stopping. When pressed they will fight to the bitter end. A bear never hollows till

he's done for or gets a death wound, and then he always cries "Oh, Lord." At least, it sounds like that; and I could always tell when he was done by that cry.

The bears go into winter quarters about the last of December and remain there until spring. After they locate their den or cave, the first thing they do is to know the trees about the mouth of it, and also where they go to water. Then they wallow till they clean themselves completely.

Then they make themselves a cork—apparently out of grass, bark and rosin chewed together very hard—and cork themselves up, and then go into the den for the winter.

I have killed numbers of them in winter quarters and examined them all over and found nothing in their entrails but a little water and a few gravels, which proved to me that they never eat anything till they come out in the spring. I believe that they suck their paws. It is certain their feet are very soft and tender when they come out. They can hardly walk. They are as fat in the spring as they are in the fall. They are always in a kind of a sleep or stupor.

The cubs come in the month of January. They are small and perfectly naked and helpless. The mother when nursing them, takes them up one at a time, and holds them to her breast. She stays right in the den

with the cubs till spring when they are large enough to follow her.

Bears protect themselves from flies and vermin by rubbing themselves in rosin, having gnawed the trees early in spring so the rosin will run.

The first of August is running time with them. They collect together and the males fight terribly, and can be heard for miles. They are very dangerous then. When the fights are over they go to the rosin trees and rub their wounds until they are completely covered, keeping away the flies. They thus rub themselves, too, when they are after honey, so the bees will not hurt them.

I thought my success as a bear hunter was because I made it a study as well as a practice. I knew how to take all advantage of them, and always kept well trained dogs. I always helped my dogs out, and never neglected them when they treed anything, but got to them as quick as I could.

I make it a point never to lose my presence of mind. Some men get so excited that they allowed the bear to escape. I know that all wild animals naturally fear man and will in most cases try to get away from him.

A panther or wolf will make fight sooner than a bear, but they are more inclined to be cowardly, or at least I have found them so. But my hunting days are

over. I can only tell what I have done, which I trust will be interesting, I have tried to tell nothing but facts, and if I have varied from the truth it is by mistake and not intentionally.

#### WHAT DR. MARTIN SAYS.

I have been personally acquainted with Uncle Johnny Gaskins for 22 years. I shall always feel grateful for the manner in which he helped me out of a difficulty with a bear.

In February, 1873, I was traveling from Jasper county, Missouri to Berryville, Arkansas, and camped near Mr. Gaskins' house one night, when a large bear came to the camp and frightened my wife and children nearly to death. My wrist was broken and I could not shoot, and besides I was afraid that if I wounded the bear he would attack us. We took our children and hurried to Mr. Gaskins' house. Mr. Gaskins invited us in and made my family comfortable, and listened to my story. He went with me back to the wagon and took four of his bear dogs and chased the bear over near the sycamore spring.

When I offered to pay him next morning he refused to take anything, but invited me to stay with him for a week, and hunt with him, for he was a great bear hunter.

He had plenty around him, and was a man generous to a fault. I often see him now, which does me good, for it reminds me of the old saying that "a friend in need is a friend indeed."

DR. J. M. MARTIN.



# ADVENTURES OF JOHN GASKINS.

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## CHAPTER I.

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### INTRODUCTION.



JOHN GASKINS, one of the oldest pioneers of Carroll county, Arkansas, was born about 1816 in Washington county, Indiana. I am a son of John and Mary Ann (Kite) Gaskins. My father was born near Cincinnati, in Ohio, and removed to the State of Indiana in early times. He died at my birth place, after which his widow with her family removed to Monroe county, Indiana, and from thence to Sullivan county, where she died. After the death of my father the support of the family devolved upon my oldest brother and myself. I remained with mother till I was nine-

teen years old, when I married Miss Susan Scott and settled on a farm in Monroe county.

Four years afterward I removed to Northwest Arkansas, settling on the White river, in Marion county. There were no mills, no post offices, and none of the conveniences of civilization here at that time. The civil law was not even enforced.

My first acquaintance in the settlement was an old hunter whose name was Cowan. He lived in an old log cabin with nothing but the earth for a floor. I think he had either ten or twelve children, all of them hearty. It was from him I learned something about wild honey, which was very plentiful.

The old man had a deer skin, fleshed, with the hair taken off. He would mount his horse "Pomp" and ride out and find a bee tree. After filling the deer skin with honey he would tie the legs together, forming a sort of leather bag. This he would bring home and hang up on a wooden peg in the corner of his cabin. Then he would say:

"Come children, get your gourds." And they came, I tell you! They would untie one of the fore legs and bring it a little twist and out would spout the honey. One would fill his gourd and then another, so it was very convenient.

All the way people had to get their meal was to

grate it or pound it in a mortar. This was very laborious, as you may believe.

I talked a great deal with Mr. Cowan and got considerable information from him about the country. I was a new-comer and anxious to learn all I could. We talked a great deal about bear hunting. Cowan weighed about two hundred pounds. He was not afraid to go right into a hole where a bear was. In a conversation one day he told me this story about one of his hunts, and I have every reason to believe it true. The story is as follows:

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#### COWAN'S BEAR STORY.

“I was hunting one day with a half breed Indian,” said Mr. Cowan. “Our dogs jumped a barren she bear and ran her into a hole.

“‘What will we do, now?’ says the Indian.

“‘You go make a torch, and we’ll go in and kill her.’ The half breed soon had the torch ready and we went in together, he carrying the light. The hole was so small that we had to crawl. I had got in about twice my length when I heard the bear snuffing and growling. I knew she was mad and was coming.

“You can’t stop a bear when it gets started. This one came on us like a railroad train. The light went

out and so did the Indian. He was small and managed to retreat; but I was so large I couldn't make it. So I ducked my head down and let her go over me.

"I nearly filled the hole and as the bear went out she tore and lacerated my back in the most dreadful manner, so that I became unconscious.

"After the bear got out and ran off, my half breed Indian friend crawled in, got me by the feet and dragged me out. I was more dead than alive; but after getting me out the Indian rubbed me and worked with me till I could sit up.

"In the meantime the dogs had chased the bear up a tree only a short distance away. I told the Indian to take my gun and go shoot her, and to keep on shooting till he killed her. After he had killed the bear we managed, between us, to get her home.

"Now, Gaskins, that broke me from going in holes after bears; I never went in after another one. I will carry to my grave the scars I got on that day. I have killed bears since then in a good many ways, but I don't go in any more holes."

#### FEROCIOUS WILD BEÁSTS.

I was very well satisfied with my new home, although the country was rough and the people even rougher. That fall I bought a hundred acres of land

and built me a house on it. The land nearly all lay in the river bottom. It was very fertile and at first I thought there was nothing in the world to hinder me from getting rich in a few years. I went to work with a will, clearing land, fencing and making me a farm.

The country was full of game and wild animals, and I was always fond of hunting. So I was delighted with the prospect before me.

Along late that fall I started one morning to go to a mill about eight miles from where I lived. Within two miles of the mill I found a wolf trap with a large gray wolf in it. I did not tackle it, but went on to the mill and told what I had seen. All hands quit work. Gathering up all the dogs that could be found, we all went back to the trap.

We wanted to have some sport with the wolf, and by pulling his legs out with a forked stick we hamstrunged him before we let him go. As soon as he got out the fun commenced. He fought the dogs for an hour, and finally whipped them all. There could scarcely be conceived a more ferocious beast. He would have got away at last, but we, having a gun with us, ran up and shot him.

A few days after that one of my neighbors, John Hatton, was out bee hunting when two large wolves attacked him. He had nothing but an axe with which



KILLING A PANTHER WITH HIS FISTS.

to defend himself, but this he used to such good purpose that he cut one of the wolves about half in two, and at last succeeded in driving the other away.

That same fall one of my neighbors had a terrible encounter with a panther. This neighbor was a large stout man, but only had about enough sense to drive up the cows. The family he lived with started him out one morning after the cows; as he was going along a small path a hungry panther jumped on him. He had nothing to defend himself with, not even so much as a pocket knife.

He fought the panther with his fist until he killed it! When he got home he was a pitiful object. His clothes were completely torn off him; and his breast and shoulders were torn and lacerated until the blood ran down in streams to his feet. They asked him how he managed to kill the panther.

“Every time it sprang at me,” said he, “I would cry out, ‘now here we take it!’ and give it a lick with my fist, until I killed it dead.”

## CHAPTER II.

## MY FIRST PANTHER.

I was very busy all that fall and winter and hunted but little, and that little was near home. I own that I was a little afraid, after hearing so many bloody tales, and knowing, too, that the country was full of wild animals.

But the next summer, after my crop was laid by, my wife and I went to visit her father, who lived twenty miles away. We had but one milk cow, and having no one to leave at home turned the calf out with the cow. Returning home a week later, I went out to hunt my cow. I started early in the morning, and took my gun and dog with me; but I had forgotten to feed the dog that morning and he left me after I got out about a mile and went back home.

I was in a small valley when I began to get frightened, but I kept on for I saw more open country

ahead. "If I can get over there where I can see," I thought, "I won't be so scared."

In the valley the weeds and grass were nearly as high as my head, and I could imagine that all sorts of dangerous animals were crouching there, ready to spring on to me. It's hard for anybody but a hunter to realize how lonesome and dangerous it seems in such a place without a dog.

Bye and bye I found bear sign. The bear had been wallowing and had gone in the same direction I traveled. This didn't suit me. I didn't want see a bear that morning, nor a panther neither.

I stopped a moment to consider the best thing to do, and then I thought about snakes. At that thought I started on as fast as I could walk; and, like a scared man, the further and the faster I got the more badly scared I became. I got to a small branch and hurried to cross it.

All at once there came such a terrible growl right before that I stopped. I could see the bulk of something and the grass moving not six feet from me. I jerked the gun from my shoulder and cocked it. I held the gun before me and began to step backward. The animal crept on, but I gained on it. When I got where I could see, the animal was not yet ten steps distant.

It was a large panther, and he was coming at me! I felt my hair raising up on my head. I brought the gun to my shoulder and said, or thought:

“Now, dog-nab you, I’ll kill you!”

I tried to draw a bead on the panther, but he kept moving, as it seemed to me, up and down and from side to side, so that there was no reasonable chance of hitting it if I shot. I took the gun down and the panther suddenly quit bobbing around; it still crept cautiously at me, however.

So I raised the gun the second time to shoot it. The same thing occurred again. That panther wouldn’t keep still! Of course I realized later it was my nerves that caused the panther’s seeming motion; but just then he appeared to dodge about in the strangest manner, and every time I tried to draw a bead he would be in a different place from where I pointed.

Perhaps the panther was as badly scared as me; or maybe he just changed his mind. At any rate, my time hadn’t come yet to have a hand-to-hand conflict, for the panther stopped suddenly and turned about and retreated. I felt good then, I tell you.

My hat seemed to be gone. I put my hand up to my head, and lo and behold! the hat was there.

“Dog-nab old Dinah! You may go. I’m going home,” says I to the panther. To back once more

safe with my wife and babies at home was the dearest ambition earth held for me just then.

When the story was told at home about my scrape with the panther my brother-in-law, Thomas, just laughed at me.

“Why didn’t you kill it, John?” says he; “who’d have thought you’d be such a coward!”

“You don’t know one dog-nabbed thing about it, Thomas,” was my reply; “and you’ll not get me back there after that cow, either, unless somebody goes with me.” So the next morning he did go with me, both of us on horseback, over the same ground. We found the cow, but saw nothing of the panther.

---

### THOMAS AND THE BEAR.

Not until the next winter did Thomas have a chance to show his bravery. One morning, soon after we had moved to our own place near the river, he said he’d go out and kill a deer.

“Go ahead, Thomas,” said I.

He took his gun and horse and started. He had not been gone very long before my wife heard him shoot; and directly he came back after the dog, saying we had shot a bear.

He took the dog and put him on the track; he soon ran the bear into a cane-brake. Thomas stayed around a short time and then came home, leaving the dog still baying the bear.

“What is the dog barking at across the river?” was my first question upon coming home after dark that night. I spoke to my wife; Thomas was in bed but heard me, and he said:

“John, it’s a bear. I crippled it and the dog run it into the cane-brake over there.”

“Well, if you had it wounded you could have killed it, Thomas.”

“Johnny,” said he, “there were two other bears in there; and what was to hinder them from getting me, even if the dog did keep that one off?”

“And you accused me of being a coward, Thomas! Dog-nab it, you are a bigger coward than me, for I a. would have stayed with my dog.”

But these were scary times for a new comer in the country, and we were just learning; but we soon got broke in, I tell you, as you will find out by reading this history.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE CLOUD BURST.

There had been much hard work done on my new home, and under many disadvantages, too. We had succeeded in getting a small orchard started, and about fifteen acres in good cultivation; and were getting along very well until the summer of 1845, when a great misfortune overtook us.

I had plowed my corn three times and was just laying it by; and a promising crop it was, too.

One evening it began lightning and thundering; looked as if there might be a storm. Mr. Stanfield came to my house to spend the night. His business was to sell me a new hat made of buckeye splints. The hat was a very clumsy thing. He talked and bragged so much I told him I might take one if he could make the splints smaller and the hat lighter; it would beat a coon-skin cap for summer, at any rate.

He was a great talker, as well as myself, and we

sat up quite late. It was still thundering, but no rain at bed time, when all fell asleep.

Some time in the night I awoke, and heard the cats squalling.

“Those cats must be on the bed with the children,” I said, calling to my wife.

She stepped on the floor, and found it covered with water. I jumped and ran to the fire place, but found the fire out, and felt the floor raising up.

“Stanfield! Stanfield!” I called.

He jumped up and picked up one of the children: I gathered up the other two and took my wife by the arm and we started out of the cabin.

Being black night, and the waters rushing around us, we had a time of the greatest danger and difficulty, and had to wade through water waist deep for fifty yards or more.

Here we found higher ground and waited for the morning's light.

We did not sleep any more, and when the day broke our eyes beheld a saddening scene of ruin and desolation.

The house was still standing, and there was a little furniture in it, and that was all that was left.

My fencing was gone, my hogs, chickens and milk house carried off by the flood: my crop utterly ruined

We had nothing, in fact, for breakfast except a little corn meal; this had been luckily sifted in a tray and kept dry by floating around on the water in the house.

I felt pretty blue, you may be sure, on seeing the state of affairs.

But there is a funny side to the most extreme disasters, and I must tell you about Mr. Stanfield's misfortune. The excitement of leaving the house in the night had caused him to forget his hat, and in the morning it was gone. We supposed it had been carried off by the flood, but after searching around he finally found it under the corner of the house. It was full of mud and had a dead hen in it besides. We got the hen out after much pulling, and the hat then looked like anything else but a hat, being all out of shape, and weighing perhaps five pounds.

"What 'll I do for a hat, Gaskins?" says Stanfield, looking the perfect picture of despair.

"Wash it."

"No, no," says he; "for then it won't go on my head."

He seemed so troubled that I couldn't help but feel sorry for him, amusing as it was. Stanfield felt anxious, too, about his own family, for he lived further up the river; so he threw the hat aside and left bareheaded for his home.

Afterward we learned that he was not injured by the flood, which, indeed, proved to be only a cloud burst, and I fared worse than any one else.

I was very much discouraged. But being young and stout I soon took courage in the saying, "Where there's a will there's a way," and set to work to fix up my place again.

But I could not be satisfied any more at that place of misfortune, and sold out that fall to remove to Carroll county.

I bought a farm of one hundred and ninety acres of land located where the town of Green Forest now stands, and moved on this place in the spring. My new farm had about forty acres in cultivation.

I was well pleased with the prospects around me. There was a good log school house near me, and also a small church house, and plenty of good Christian neighbors. I enjoyed all of these very much, feeling glad to be where there was civilization once more.

Although it was rather late, I managed to get my corn in early enough to make a good crop, and after laying my crop by devoted the most of the time that fall and winter to killing deer and traveling around.

There were a good many old buffalo licks to be found in this county at that time, but the buffaloes had all gone.

## CHAPTER IV.

## BIG GAME IN THE OSAGE MOUNTAINS.

Along that winter John Scott, Willis Dunlap, David Hayhurst, James Matthews and myself took a trip up in the Osage mountains to kill some wild hogs that belonged to Dunlap. We took my well-trained dog along, besides three other dogs that belonged to members of the party.

We found found that the hogs had moved their range; but we went on for a mile or two, and struck a large track, and began to guess what it could be.

“ ’Tis a bear track,” said Scott.

We followed it on and Scott kept saying to me:

“It’s a bear, John; you stay back and make your dog stay back, too.”

“You let my dog go on,” says I; “he knows what what he’s doing.”

We passed on around under a large cliff and found

that the supposed bear had jumped on a higher ledge of rock. We could not climb up there.

“Scott, you hold my gun,” says I: “I’ll climb a tree and get on the ledge and see if he is there.”

“No, no!” says Scott. “You had better not go up there, John. I see a hole in the rock. He may be in that hole and if he is he’ll knock blazes of lightning out of you.”

“I’ll take my gun, then, Scott. I’m going up there and if it wants to knock any lightning out of me, I’ll help it.”

I climbed a sapling and looked into the hole, but there was nothing there. I could see, though, where the beast had jumped still higher up, and by looking further found where it had gone down again.

“You needn’t come up here, boys,” I called down to them from my place on the higher ledge. “It seems to have gone down again. But my dog’s up here and we’ll go on till we find a place to come down.”

I walked and ran for about a half mile before I found a place to go down. Before starting down I happened to look below. There was a large panther coming right up towards me.

“Go!” says I, to the dog.

He jumped for the panther and it turned and ran, going across the mountain and into the next cove. I followed as fast as possible, stumbling over the rocks,

but trying to keep in sight. When I got up to them again the dog had caught the panther and the two were fighting. They rolled down the mountain as they fought, and it seemed to me that the panther was killing the dog.

“Take him! Dog-nab him! Take him!” I halloed to the dog, running up to frighten the panther. He did seem to be scared and ran further around the mountain. Here he took refuge in the mouth of a cave, that seemed to be his den.

The dog was barking and the panther made the rocks tremble with his loud and vicious growling. My hair almost raised on my head, for I couldn't see him at first. When I got around facing him, the dog, encouraged by my presence, rushed forward, and the panther struck him and knocked him about ten steps.

I thought the dog would be killed, but he didn't seem to be hurt, and it may as well be explained that this panther, perhaps in dragging himself over the rocks, had pulled his front claws out, and his toes were all bleeding. So he could only strike the dog with his velvety foot.

The dog was back at the panther in an instant, but not before I raised my gun and shot him in the head. The ball struck too low and too much on one side, tearing away one side of his nose and lip, knocking out a whole row of teeth. Without waiting to see the

effect of the shot, I stepped back behind a rock to reload my gun. Dog and panther were fighting again, and the panther's cries and growls were terrible to hear. As the blood filled his mouth he would snuffle and cough.

I succeeded in getting another shot, but the dog interfered and again the bullet failed to strike a vital place, and I retreated to load. The panther had changed his position now, and was fighting the dog just behind the rock by the path. Every moment I expected the dog to be killed, and although in passing around to where the panther could be seen I had to go so close as to almost touch him, I nerved myself to the ordeal and went by him. Fortunately, the dog held his attention, and so he didn't see me.

My gun was a flint lock, and in the haste to reload I had got snow in the pan and the gun failed to fire, but every time it snapped the dog jumped at the panther, only to get knocked down again. I re-primed the gun and at last it fired, knocking the panther back between the rocks. He could not get up, but lay there and lashed his tail and howled and bit the rocks in a perfect agony of pain and anger. I called the dog back and sat down to wait, feeling sure the panther was dying.

After a little I heard the other hunters up above, and Scott halloed down to me.

“John,” says he, “what have you got?”

“I’ve got a regular old he bear down here, Scott.”

He listened and could hear the moans and growls of the panther in its death agonies. The sound poured up between the rocks.

“John,” says he, in great excitement, “I’ll be dod-dinged if I don’t hear it! I hear it. How can a fellow get down?”

Then without waiting for a reply he began to climb down the opening.

“Hold on, Scott,” says I. “You cant come down there. You are coming right down on it. Go back and look for my tracks and follow them down. That’s the only way you can get here.”

They were not long in getting down and around to where we were. Scott came running up, puffing as he ran.

“John,” says he, “Be dod-dinged if it aint a panther, and you’ve got him. But he aint dead yet. Must I shoot him?”

“No! I’ve shot him three times already, and that’s enough. You can take a rock and knock him on the head if you want to.” He tried that, but its head was so hard he couldn’t crack its skull. Then he pulled out his butcher knife and stuck it, and jumped back crying:

“John, that will do him. Dod-ding him he flops his tail just like a ’possum.”

We pulled the panther out and measured him with a pole, and he measured ten feet from the tip of his nose to the end of his tail. He was so old that he was getting gray. He had been a terror in that neighborhood for years, carrying off pigs and calves. He was so very fat that we got twenty pounds of tallow from him.

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### TWO MYSTERIOUS WOLVES.

The neighborhood had been troubled a great deal with wolves, and the neighbors told me there was a large gray wolf in the country which had been often seen, but was so cunning that nobody could ever get a shot at him.

“Well,” says I. “I’m here now, and that wolf has got to die. He and I can’t hunt in the same woods together. I’ll get him, sure.”

About the middle of February I started out one day to hunt for deer. There was a light snow on the ground and it was melting a little on the south side of the mountains. After going along about a mile in a small path, I looked ahead of me and saw the old gray wolf coming toward me in a long lope. He had not

seen me, and I hid behind a large tree, knowing from the direction he came that he would have to cross my tracks in the path.

“I’ve got you now,” I thought, and waited with cocked gun for him to come on: “When you get near enough I’ll bleat like a sheep and you’ll stop long enough for me to get a dead shot.”

But he was too cunning for that. Just as he reached the path he scented my tracks and jumped as high as my head, and away he went. The more I bleated, the faster he ran, and there was no chance for a shot.

About two weeks after that I was hunting deer among the Osage mountains and moved very quietly along one of the slopes.

I slipped up to a place where several little points ran down on the south side of the mountain, expecting surely to see a deer there. I peeped around from behind a tree. There was no deer there, but instead, only a short distance away, there lay the old gray wolf, sunning himself. His head looked as big as a horse’s head.

“Well, I’ll get you sure this time,” was my thought.

I raised my gun and drew a bead. The very hairs on his head were to be seen. But just as I was pulling the trigger he took the alarm somehow and leaped to his feet. I fired and he rolled over and over down the hill out of sight. I stopped to reload, watching all

the while, and the next thing I saw was a small black wolf running away from the place when this gray wolf had disappeared. The black wolf was too far off for me to shoot, but I followed him around above hoping to get a shot. I struck his track and found plenty of blood.

“What does this mean?” was my thought. “Here I shoot at a gray wolf and wound a black one which I never saw before!”

The black wolf in the distance could be seen rolling down the hill and whining awfully. I stopped, hoping he would come back. But he kept on making such a fuss that I went over there. He was gone, but the snow where he had been rolling was all covered with blood. I followed him over a mile, but could never get a shot, and at last he got away from me altogether, and I went home, where the matter was related to my wife.

“I shoot a gray wolf. He rolls down the hill and changes into a black wolf, and the black one runs away, bleeding from fresh wounds.”

“Well, you are mistaken,” says she. “It was the black dog you shot.”

“Dog-nab if it was! I shot a gray wolf and saw no black one until after the shot.”

The matter bothered me considerably. I didn't sleep much that night for thinking about it, and next

morning went over to my nearest neighbor, Mr. Dunlap, and told him about it.

“Gaskins,” says he, “you are surely mistaken; it was the black wolf you shot at.”

“Dog-nab if it was. And I’ll never be satisfied without going back there to find out what it means.”

“I’ll go with you,” says he.

So went back together, and put the dogs on the track. They followed down the hill the way the gray wolf had rolled, and, sure enough, there we found him dead.

By looking around we found that both wolves had been laying there, the black one below. The bullet had gone clean through the gray wolf and struck the black one.

Well, I was satisfied, I had got the old gray wolf that all had told me nobody could get a shot at. I began to think I was a pretty good hunter, even if the first panther I saw had scared me so badly.

I had now killed one large panther and the terrible and cunning old gray wolf.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE FOUR-TINED BUCK.

My next encounter came near getting away with me. This is the way it happened: I had contracted to build a house some three miles from where I lived, and had a man of the name of Shipman helping me. We started one morning to work and one of our neighbor's dogs followed us. We had gone about a mile when there came running along a four-point buck, and as he passed us I shot, breaking his fore leg. The dog gave chase and the buck ran on in the direction we traveled.

We went to our work and in about three hours the dog came back to us, covered with blood and badly used up.

"The dog has caught that deer. He has been in a fight with it," says I; "if we can only get him to take us back to it we can kill it."

"If the dog hasn't killed it already," said Shipman.

"Well, we'll see," said I.

We started the dog and followed him. After going down a long slope and across a very rocky branch, he ran up on a little point and brought the deer to bay in a thicket. The dog was afraid to go in at first, but I urged him and he finally plunged into the thicket out of sight.

In a minute he was back again, the buck coming after him with great, vicious lunges.

When the buck saw us he turned and ran about a hundred yards down the branch and jumped into a hole of water, the dog hot after him.

We both ran down there, finding that the dog had caught the buck by the ear.

I stuck my gun down and fired, aiming to break the buck's back; but the ball went too low and simply made him madder than ever. I saw at once that he was going to kill the dog, and that before I could reload the gun.

"Dog-nab if I can stand it, Shipman," says I; "I am going to help that dog."

And without stopping to think twice—for no true hunter can stand coldly by and see a good dog in danger—I jumped into the water and seized the buck by the horns. I had no sooner done so than he turned away from the dog and began to strike at me with his feet. The ungrateful dog—though maybe I oughtn't to blame him, for he was tired out—at once swam

ashore and lay down. And there I was, in that hole with a mad deer and it doing its best to kill me.

“Shipman!” I begged; “come and help me.”

“Oh, no, no; I’m afraid,” says he.

“Get it by the hind legs and pull it back, so I can get my knife out and stab it.”

“I can’t,” says he.

All this time the buck was fighting like nothing else but a wounded buck can fight. He would rush me in toward the shore until it was almost impossible to escape his horns. Then he would swing me around into the deep water, cutting at me with his feet. I was becoming rapidly exhausted. I didn’t dare to let loose, and I couldn’t hold on much longer.

“Shipman, I’ve got to have help,” says I; “go and get a club and do something.”

He went and I thought he never would come back. But I held on, for it was death to let go, and he came at last, armed with a heavy stick. He struck the deer across the back, and to my great relief it instantly sank down. I held on to the horns with one hand and reached for my knife and stuck him with the other. I wanted to be sure he was dead before I let loose.

And that was the last four-tined buck I ever tried to hold by the horns.

But that same fall I had another very narrow escape from a large buck.

## A BUCK THAT WAS NOT DEAD.

I had killed a fine deer one morning and, after hanging it up in a tree, started for my horse so I could carry it home. My way lay up a small creek, and I stopped to wash my hands at a convenient hole of water, laying my gun down near by. While washing, I heard a stick break just below me and behind a drift. At the same time my dog began to growl.

Without raising, I looked up and could see above the drift the horns and nose of a big buck.

I reached for my gun and shot him. From the way he fell back I thought his neck was broken.

My dog ran around to him and I heard him bleat, but thought nothing of that, and got up and started, leaving my gun on the ground, and when I got around in sight the dog had him by the throat. With my knife in my hand I walked up to stick him.

I was within five feet of him when he batted his eye a time or two and at the same moment sprang to his feet. He tore loose from the dog and lunged at me. I had no time to run or even dodge, and just bent myself over to one side as far as possible.

His horns grazed my side as he went by, and the dog grabbing at his throat helped to turn him aside, and that was all that saved me.

The buck ran about fifty yards down stream and jumped into a hole of water which was deep enough to come up on his sides. The dog, having to swim, could not do much with him; for every time swam up close enough the buck would souse him under the water and would have soon drowned him. I reloaded my gun as quick as I could and ran up in about thirty steps of him and shot him through the heart.

He made one last desperate lunge at the dog and caught him between his horns and pinned him to the bank. I thought my dog was killed, but after pulling the buck back so he could get out I found he had been as lucky as myself and was not hurt much.

After I got the buck out and examined him, I found that the first shot had only broken his under jaw, and this it was which had enraged him so.

I have always thought since then that it was a dangerous business to rush upon a deer while it can blink its eye or get up after you have wounded it: for in all my many encounters with bears and panthers I have never felt that I have been in a closer place or any nearer being killed than I have with mad deer.

## CHAPTER VI.

## MY KANSAS TRIP.

I had been very prosperous and was getting along well, which was an easy matter to do in those times. The country was thinly settled; the range was good; the climate warm. I had to feed my stock but little in the winter season, and had accumulated a good deal of stock around me.

But I was like a great many other men who are doing well in the world—wanted to do better. And about that time the Kansas fever struck this part of Arkansas. I heard so much about Kansas being a good grazing country for stock that I sold my farm and started to Kansas in company with my father-in-law, William Scott, and a Mr. Robertson. This was in the year 1855. We took our families and all of our stock with us. Our purpose was to raise stock in Kansas.

We traveled on in a cheerful mood until we reached Spring river, in Missouri about twenty miles from the

Kansas line. We stopped there for a few days, and while there saw a great many people leaving Kansas. We made some inquiry and were told of hot times out there. People were fighting and stealing and so on.

We remained at Spring river a few days longer and I studied the matter over and came to the conclusion that I was not into these Kansas troubles and did not want to get into them. So I went to my father-in-law and Mr. Robertson and said:

“I think we had better go back to Arkansas.”

“We are of the same notion as you,” said they.

We all turned back, satisfied with what we had heard about Kansas. We came back to Carroll county.

I stopped on Clifty creek, eight miles from where the famous Eureka Springs were discovered. It was late in the fall and there were no houses to be had, so I moved into a cave, or my “rock house” as I called it, until we could do better. There was not room enough for me to unload but one wagon while there. I had to be away from home a good deal, looking after my stock and trying to procure a house.

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#### A PANTHER AT OUR ROCK HOUSE.

One night when I was absent from home there

came a large panther prowling about. He finally jumped up on top of the cave.

The dogs could not get at him, but they made a terrible uproar. My wife called them to her and managed to quiet them.

The panther, after growling and scratching around for a long time, finally went away.

My children were badly frightened, but my wife, who was a brave little woman, was not scared. She remained up the balance of the night, watching and caring for the little ones.

I then bought a small cabin and we moved to it, but did not have room there to unload but one wagon.

I fixed up a temporary shed to the cabin, so that we could make out. I then started two of my boys to a mill and store which was some eight miles distant to get flour and groceries, and also a gallon of whiskey.

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#### A HOT FIGHT WITH A BEAR.

One Saturday evening soon after I got my supplies I told my wife that I would go up above the house on a hill, covered with a heavy growth of cedar, and kill a turkey for Sunday. We expected some of our relatives to visit us the next day.

After telling the boys to tie up the dogs so they couldn't follow, I took my gun and started, and about

three hundred yards from the house I heard a little noise in the cedars ahead of me.

I paused a moment and presently saw a bear going along to the left of me.

When the bear saw me he turned and trotted over the hill out of sight.

“Boys! boys!” I called. “Untie the dogs and let them come. There is a bear here.”

They untied the dogs and here they came, both boys and dogs yelling. The dogs started on the track and though we followed them as fast as we could they soon got out of hearing.

I thought they had gone over the mountain, but in a few minutes I heard a growl, and looked up and saw the bear and dogs. They came rolling down the side of the mountain in front of my house.

My wife saw the dogs and the bear, but did not see us and had not heard me shoot.

She picked up the axe. “You stay at the house,” she said to the small children, “and I will go and help the dogs kill the bear.” She had got about half way when the children all started after her, screaming for her to come back, that they were afraid. She stopped and went back with them.

When myself and the boys came up they were still fighting and the bear had one of my dogs in his hug and I thought was squeezing him to death. Another

one of the dogs held the bear by the ear, while my old dog kept him down by catching him by the hind leg and jerking him back every time he got up.

I couldn't see any place to shoot the bear without hitting a dog, so I laid my gun down.

"We'll take rocks to him, boys."

So we pelted him with rocks until we knocked out all his front teeth. By that time the dogs had got him down in the gulch on his back. I ran and got me a stout pole and stuck one end of it under a projecting rock and then down over the bear's neck. I had him then, and told the boys to hold down the pole, which they did. I stuck the bear with my knife and killed him. We took him to the house and skinned him and found him nice and fat. I thought that it was the best meat I had ever eaten.

This was my first bear and I was mighty proud, and wanted to brag a little about it, and so started to take my father-in-law a piece of the meat. Passing Uncle Jack Reynold's on the way, I also stopped and presented him with a piece. Now, Reynolds was an old man, but had never killed a bear, and he says:

"Gaskins, how did you kill it?"

"My dogs caught it and held it while I stuck it with a knife."

"What!" says he, and he looked as if he didn't believe a word of it; but I insisted that it was the truth.

There were two of his neighbors there, both strangers to me. They had lived there for several years before me, but were both afraid of bears, and they looked at each other and winked. They thought I was lying, but I kept on, talking and rather boasting until I left.

So early the next morning one of these men came to my house, and I knew in a minute what he had come for. So I says:

“Come around and see my bear skin; it is a nice one. You can see where I stuck it.”

I had been careful to leave the knife-hole in the skin, and he looked it all over until he was satisfied.

“Do you find any bullet hole in the skin?”

“No,” says he, and walked off.

We had then been in our cabin about six weeks, and my wife began to complain. She said:

“There is no room here to spin or weave, and you must get another place.”

“We do not need to spin or weave. We have a plenty of bear meat, pork, deer, turkeys and cows, besides all the milk and butter we want. I am satisfied for I am just where I want to be,” was my reply.

A few days afterward I started out to look for my cattle, they having become scattered. The weather was dark and rainy. I rode all day until late in the evening, and was then so far away from home, not knowing

the country, that I got lost. I would get into a gulch and follow it down to a creek, and then into another and it would lead down to the same creek every time. and finally I concluded to follow the creek down, and did so until I came to a farm and a house.

I rode up to the house and called and an old man came to out.

“I am lost and want to get to Clifty,” says I.

“You are nine miles from Clifty,” says he. “You can hardly get there tonight, but you are very welcome to stay with me until morning.”

The old gentleman's name was Hobbs, and I found him to be very talkative. He had lived on that creek for twelve years, and the creek was called Leatherwood. During our conversation he told me that he wanted to sell out. I liked the appearance of the place very well, and had seen no better range for stock any where. So the next morning we looked around over his land and I bought two hundred acres of land from him one mile up the creek from where he lived. Forty acres was deeded land and the rest of it a claim. There was a small house on my forty, and a few acres in cultivation.

I then went home and we reloaded our wagons and moved over to our new home. We were now settled again, and I was well pleased, for there was plenty of range for stock. There was no one living above me

on the creek, and Mr. Hobbs the only one for miles below. I was surrounded with mountains and valleys covered with heavy timber and rich vegetation, and the country full of game of all kinds as well as wild animals, such as bears, pathers, wild cats and catamounts.

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#### THE BEARS ARE TOO NUMEROUS.

I was fond of hunting but did not hunt much that spring and summer, for myself and boys were very very busy, clearing, fencing and getting our corn crop in. That spring I bought thirty-five head of hogs and turned them out on the range. A few days afterward I met Mr. Hobbs, and he says:

“Gaskins, the bears will kill your hogs.”

“No,” says I; “I will kill the bears.”

Then he went on to tell me that the bears would come to the pen and take the hogs out and carry them away. When I asked him where his dogs were all this time, he said that his dog would run out and get scared and then run back to the house and under the bed. I told him that if my dogs did that way I would kill every dog-nabbed one of them and get me a new set. And then I continued:

“I am going to kill these bears. They can't do me that way.”

He told others what I had said, that I was going to kill the bears, and they laughed and hooted at the idea.

So along that summer the bears did get to killing my hogs, and made way with about half of them. The neighbors would say to me:

“Gaskins, thought you were going to kill the bears—why don’t you do it?”

“I will when the time comes,” was my reply. “I am waiting for them to get fat. Then I’ll go for ’em.”

I did not hunt much that summer only as I was passing about.

I was out looking for my horses one day and went up a small branch through grass and vines. All at once two large foxes come running right at me, growling and snapping at my legs so viciously and so quickly that I thought they would bite me any way.

I tried to shoot them, but they kept jumping so fast and so quick it was all I could do to keep them off of me by striking at them with my gun; but I finally got a shot, and, though I missed them, they ran off to their young ones near by. This is what caused them to make fight with me.

A short time afterward I was at Mr. Hobbs’ and told him about the foxes. He laughed heartily.

“Gaskins,” says he, “you talk about killing bears and let two foxes get away with you like that!”

## CHAPTER V.

## MY FIRST BEAR HUNT.

That fall I started out with my dogs to hunt bears. I hunted faithfully for three days and found none. I could find where they had been and knew they were there. So I kept on.

On the fourth day my dog started a very large bear on a mountain. It was so heavy and fat that it could hardly run and the dogs soon caught it.

As they fought they rolled down the mountain until they finally got the bear into the gulch. I was going as fast as I could and just before I got to them I heard one of my dogs howling, and found that he had his fore leg broken and was badly used up.

I did not try to shoot the bear for fear of hitting my dogs, and the bear got up and started up the mountain again, with two of the dogs holding on to him, and the crippled one following after the best he could.

After going for some distance, the bear went into a cave on the bench of the mountain. When I got

there the dogs were in there fighting him. I stooped down and was listening at the battle within when I heard a noise behind me, and saw it was the crippled dog coming on three legs. The brave fellow went right in the cave to help fight the bear.

I could hear them but was afraid to shoot in there among the dogs. So I listened and waited, which was all that I could do.

Directly I heard them coming. The place had got too hot for the bear. He came on ahead of the dogs, and I waited till he was about half way out of the hole and shot him.

I did no more than break his shoulder. He rolled down the mountain a short distance and then stopped and started back up again. The dogs worried him till he could hardly get along, but he finally reached a high cliff. Here he stopped and picked up one of the dogs and threw him down the precipice. It must have been a hundred feet.

The bear went on, there then being but one dog to bother him.

I looked down the bluff, thinking the dog who had fallen so far was surely killed. But he got up and came on after the bear, and seemed scarcely hurt.

The bear went on about a quarter of a mile and went into another cave. When I got there found the dogs had entered the cave and were in there shaking

the bear. He seemed to be so tired and worried that he paid but little attention to them.

I called the dogs out and tied them and then shot the bear, hitting him in the mouth, but not killing him. It was now getting late, and my dogs were all so stiff and crippled up that I knew they could do no more then. So I carried logs and stopped up the hole so that he could not get out and then went to my horse, hitched a half mile away, and then to Mr. Tumlin's, still another mile away, and got his boy to go to my wife and tell her to send me some grub and blankets, as I was going into camp at the mouth of that cave. The boy also went to my brother-in-law's for help.

I then went back to my dogs and my bear. Not long afterward, Scott came and several others with him. Scott was very excitable, and as soon as he got to me, he says:

“John, I'll be dod-dinged if I don't hear him!”

“Yes: he's in there.”

“Well,” says he, “we'll take out the dogs and let him come out and I'll shoot blazes, of lightning out of him.”

“No, we wont do that,” says I. My dogs are too sore and stiff. I dont want them to fight him any more.”

“Well,” says he, “what are you going to do?”

“Take out some of the logs and I’ll show you, Scott,”

He did so. We made a little smoke at the mouth of the Cave, and by holding up blankets to keep the smoke in, soon had the bear pretty well smoked. He began to snuff and sneeze and groan.

Then he became still and we could hear no more of him. We took all the logs away and Scott went in and with a stick punched the bear and found him dead, when we pulled him out and skined him. He would have weighed four hundred pounds, and was the fattest bear that I ever killed, for I kept his sides until the next summer and then they were six inches thick.

My bear hunting had then commenced, and I kept it up, killing fifteen bears that winter and never losing a start. Some of them were regular old hog-eaters, too, which had been in there for years. The people soon began to believe that I could kill bears, and they began to call me “lucky John,” and “honest John.”

“I think it is just good horse sense more than any thing else,” I told them.

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#### FIVE BEARS IN TWO DAYS.

I believe the best luck I ever had killing bears was in the winter of 1887-8, on Clifty Creek, eight miles

from where I lived. My "rock house," as I called it, was over there, and I would go there and camp, staying several days at a time.

One morning I took my gun and gathering up my dogs started from home. My son Sam went with me. We intended to be gone several days. Before we got to Clifty we killed two bears and hung them up and went to the rock house and camped.

That night it snowed and we started out next morning before it was early enough to see to shoot. Within a hundred and fifty yards of the house I noticed my old "start" dog throw up his head and begin to snuff the air and then start out.

I was satisfied that he scented bear. He ran a short distance and in a few minutes he came back on the track and ran yelping over the hill, when he jumped an old she bear and two yearlings. She made fight at him.

I ran up near enough and shot her, breaking her thigh. She rolled over a time or two and then arose. The cubs ran off with two of the dogs after them.

My little "Coly" was a dog had lately bought and he knew nothing about bear, but he wanted to do something so he ran up and grabbed the old she by the jaw. She shook him loose and threw him about ten feet away. He got up running and I never saw a dog run so fast.

“Here Coly! Here Coly!” I called, but he never looked back, but ran only the faster, saying “boo” at every jump. I kept on calling and he finally came back. This time he went over where the two old dogs were fighting the yearlings, which they had caught. Coly took hold and did his best to help them.

The old she made right for us. But she could not come very fast. My gun was still empty, but Sam had a small rifle, and while the bear was trying to get over a log about ten feet from us, he says:

“Pap, let me shoot her,”

“Go ahead,” says I.

So he fired, and shot her right in the sticking place and she fell back dead.

I then ran to where the dogs were fighting the cub they had caught.

“Give me my knife, Sam, till I stick it,” says I! but turned and saw Sam was not there. But presently he come up, saying:

“Pap, I shot her in in the sticking place, sure enough.” The boy had stopped to examine the dead bear.

I took the knife and stuck the Cub, and we started the dogs after the other one and soon tracked it down and killed it.

This made five bears we had killed, and only out one night from home.

We dragged our bear all into camp and skinned them. We only had one horse there and we packed him up with meat and Sam went home and got another horse, and we both returned that night.

I thought seven hundred pounds of meat was pretty good for two days.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## MY BEAR CHASE.

My self, Thomas Clark, Willam Shelton and Joseph Shelton all started out one snowy day to hunt bear and if we found any we went to have a chase, I taking my dogs, which were all well trained. I did not keep any other sort.

We had gone only a short distance when we struck a bear track and we followed it for about three miles when we came to where some other dogs were following the same track.

My dogs all left the track and came back to us except one small dog that I called the "preacher," and he was a good one, too.

He kept on the track until he treed the bears in a hole or cave. He went in, but, finding they were too much for him, he came out and started back to us.

We had been following on, and met "preacher."

He turned back and we followed him and found that the bears were in the hole.

We did not try to get them out then but stopped up the hole to keep them in there and then went on, for we were still wanting to have a chase.

We kept going until we came to where there was a large pigeon roost and there my old "start" dog struck another bear track, which we followed for about half mile and came again to where some one else was following the same track.

But we could see that there were no dogs on the track, so went on a short distance and found where the bear had been killed by two men whom I saw saw several dogs afterward, and they told me how they killed it. The bear was in a large oak tree which was very leaning and had a large hole in the body of it and the bear was in there and they, coming up to the tree and making a little noise, he stuck his head out at the hole, he said.

He then shot him and he fell back but soon came out again and he shot him the second time, killing him.

The bear weighed over three hundred pounds and had brought him seventy-five dollars at Peirce City.

We, after finding where the bear had been killed, gave up our chase and went home, and it being Christmas week we still thought that we would have some sport, or fun, with the bears which we had stop-

ped up in the cave. So I sent word around to the neighbors and we all agreed on a certain day to meet at the cave.

By nine o'clock in the morning there were between thirty and forty gathered at the cave--men, women and children—to see me tie the yearlings, for I had told them that I thought we could kill the old she and I could tie the two yearlings and take them home, with me. My plan was, to tie the yearlings by putting a short fork across their necks, pinning them down to the ground while two strong men would pull their legs back and I would tie them. I told a Mr. Babbit how to prepare the fork while Claiborn Ash and Sam Gaskins were to pull their legs back for tying.

After getting everything ready the fun was now to commence. So taking a light, we went in the cave, but found no bear. We then examined the cave and found a small hole or opening leading farther back and the bears were back in there. Now the question was, how were we to get them out. The hole was small, only large enough for one man to crawl in, so we came out again.

We then made a torch of rich pine and two of the men crawled in the hole, and soon as the light was pushed in to where the bears were the old she slapped it out with her paw, leaving them in the dark; and having no room to shoot they had to back out.

I told them then not to go in there any more; that we would try to get them out some other way. So we then got a long pole and withed a torch on the end of that and pushed it in the hole, but that did no good, for as soon as the torch was in reach of her she bit and slapped it all out, burning her paws and mouth badly.

It was then getting late in the evening and the most of the crowd had gone home, leaving only myself and those that were concerned in the hunt there. I then told them that we would smoke them out. So we made a little smoke at the mouth of the smoke hole and then held up blankets to keep the smoke in.

The old bear soon came out through the opening and fell over dead. We dragged her out and, taking out her entrails as quick as possible, hung her up.

We then made another torch and two of the men crawled back in the hole, expecting to find the yearlings dead also, but when they got in to where they were they were yet alive, and made fight at them. and they had to back out again.

I told them then that we would stop them up in there and go home and come back the next day and try getting them out. So we did, and went back the next morning thinking we could probably get them out alive and have some fun with them yet.

Pretty soon the old bear came out through the open-

ing and fell over dead. We then dragged her out and, taking out her entrails as quick as possible, hung her up:

We then made another torch and two of the men crawled back in the hole, expecting to find the yearlings dead also, but when they got in there they were still alive. They made fight and the men had to crawl back out again.

I told them then that we would stop them up in there and go home, coming back the next day and try getting them out. So we did the next morning.

After preparing a torch two of the men crawled into the hole again, and the bears made fight as before. The men then shot one of the bears, pulling it out with them. It was then decided to send my dog, the "preacher," in the hole alone. Tige, another one of my dogs, was to go in and help "preacher," if he was about to get the worst of the fight. In a few moments I heard "preacher" give a fierce growl.

"Untie Tige in a hurry," I said to the men.

And in he went and we could hear them both fighting and the bear begging, but it was a long while when the bear came out, both of the dogs holding to him. But it being smoky in the cave and hardly any air, the dogs were about done for. Just as one of them fell over we stuck the bear and killed it, pulling the dogs out to the air as quickly as possible.

We now had about five hundred pounds of nice meat for our trouble. I then told my neighbors that I did not care for my hogs, for I had more than fifteen hundred pounds of bear meat in my smokehouse, besides all the deer and turkey that we wanted.

It was then that they began to call me Uncle Johnny Gaskins, "the bear hunter," a name which has clung to me ever since.

From 1859 to 1866 I did but very little bear hunting and which I will give a short history of hereafter.

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### THREE INDIANA BOYS.

In the fall of 1867, one Saturday evening, three men drove up to my house and inquired:

"Does Uncle Johnny Gaskins live here?"

I went out and told them he did, and they told me that they were from near Indianapolis, Indiana, and had been in Arkansas for two weeks hunting bear, but could not find any. They said they had been sent to me with the impression that if there were any bear in the country I could find them.

I then asked them who they were and they told me, which was Alphas, Burt and Abel Tolbert, and said they were very anxious to kill a bear to take back home. They wanted me to go with them and help get one.

I told them that I could not go then for I had been summoned to court at Carrollton on Monday, and I would be gone probably the whole week, but would go with them after returning. So they went back to Cassville, Missouri, where they were stopping.

In about ten days they came back, and Alphus, who was the oldest, said to me:

“Uncle Johnny, here we are. We have grub and everything prepared to last us a week, and if you will just go along and help us get a bear we will pay you anything in reason.”

I told him I was ready to go and sent one of my boys with them to the Sycamore springs, four miles distant, which was a good place to camp.

Taking my dogs and gun I went across the mountains, thinking I might find bear or see some sign of them, but found none, and went on to the springs where they were camped.

The next morning we started out and hunted all day faithfully, but found no bear. So that night I told the boys that we would have to move our camp: that there were no bear in these woods.

The next morning we sent Abel Tolbert with the wagon and camp outfit to a vacant house which was about two miles below there, and we told him to have plenty of turnips cooked for our dinner.

Alphus, Burt and myself started on a hunt, we g-

ing across the country until we reached the Trace hollow. After starting up the mountain we were as quiet as possible watching the dog, when my old "start" dog and the "preacher" both jumped upon a large pine log, and were scenting along. Burt noticed them and walked up to the log, when suddenly he threw up his hands and hollowed to me:

"Lord have mercy, Uncle John! Just come here; I never saw so much bear sign in my life."

"No," I says. "But can't you be still, for we are going to get into it now."

The dogs started up the mountain and us after them in a run. After we got to the top we heard the dogs and, by looking across the gulch, we could them after the bear.

Alphus then got excited. Throwing up his hands he says:

"Look! Look! Uncle John, I see the bear; I see him. The dogs have got him."

Alphus and Burt both went on a run.

"Don't shoot among my dogs," I hollowed after them.

Burt got to them first. He threw his gun down and, taking his knife, he ran up to where the dogs and bear were fighting. Putting his knee between the dogs and the bear he stuck the bear and ripped up, cutting the bear open.

By this time Alphus got there and he was still excited. He ran up and cut the bear open on the other side, killing it.

Just as I got there Burt bent back and hollowed as loud as he could:

“Hurrah for General Grant. We are the Union men that can kill them, Uncle John.”

“Yes, that’s it,” I said.

I never saw two boys prouder than they were over that bear. They had run until the sweat was running down their faces.

I told them to take the entrails out of the bear and we would go on try to get another.

We started the dogs on track of the other two bears, and in a short time heard them going over the mountain.

Alphus and Burt were both wild. They started on a run up the steep and rough mountain-side. I walked on behind, but could hear nothing of them when I reached the top. They had run down into the gulch after the two old hounds, which had fooled them. Burt had thrown his knee cap out of place and could hardly walk when I found him.

“You go on to the house,” says I, “and bring the mules to where the bear is waiting.”

When we got the dead bear to the house we found that Abel, sure enough, had cooked turnips.

They started to Cassville that night, taking the bear with them. They said they would put it in a box and take it to Indiana. Alphus wanted his father to see it just as it had been killed.

A few years afterward they all moved to Missouri, settling near Cassville, and as long as they lived they never forgot that bear hunt.

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#### ANOTHER BIG HUNT.

Squire Haggert, one of my neighbors, always wanted to take a bear hunt with me, so we made arrangements to go.

I took all of my dogs with me. It was not long until the dogs struck the track of what we thought was a bear and run it into a den, near where the town of Eureka Springs now stands. When we got there, the dogs were in the den, fighting. We could not get to them, and so we waited for some time, and as they came out, we would tie them one by one.

We then carried logs and stopped up the den and went home to get help. I had already employed two men, Mr. Cordell and Mr. Saylor, to take out bear for me from the dens. I gave them half of the meat. They were always ready to go into any kind of a place after a bear. I started after these two men and met my brother-in-law, Scott.

“You let me go in there and bring ’em out,” said he, insisting so hard that I finally consented.

We began to take out the logs and Scott says:

“John, it’s been gnawin’ the logs. And here is fur on the logs. I’ll be dod-dinged if there’s anything in there but a catamount or wild cat.”

“Yes,” says I, “there’s a bear in there and you had better be careful.”

We took all the logs away and Scott started in, declaring he could kill all there was in there with his knife.

“You take your gun,” says I. “You never know what’s in a cave.” And I made him take it.

Sam Gaskins went with him. When they got back about fifty feet, all at once they heard a terrible growling and scratching behind some rocks that they could not see over. So they came out.

“John,” says Scott, “I’ll be dod-dinged if there ain’t something in there. It’s in there and I’ll not go in there any more unless you’ll take your big gun and go in with me.”

“No, I can’t go in there,” says I, looking at Squire Haggert, who was standing there.

“Gaskins,” says the squire, “I can’t go in there for I promised my wife last night that I would not go in.”

“Well then,” says I, “we can leave it there and go home.”

“No, no;” says the squire, “we won’t do that. John, if you will go in, I will go with you.”

“All right,” says I, and we started in together. We had got only a short distance when we heard that same fierce growling and scratching, but could see nothing.

“I think it’s a panther,” says I; “and some of us will get hurt.” Then I turned around and walked out and they all followed me. We were both afraid to go back.

“I am not obliged to risk my life in this place I added on the outside; “but I’ll see Cordell and Saylor. Let’s stop up the hole.”

The next day I came again with Cordell and Saylor. They went in and met a large panther, and both emptied their guns at it without killing it, when it crawled behind the rock again. They reloaded their guns and walked up to the rock, putting their guns close to the panther’s head before they fired, killing it dead.

“Gaskins, how will we divide the meat this time?” they all asked after they had dragged the big fellow outside. “You can take it all,” says I.

A few days afterward I saw Squire Haggert. “If you ever go bear hunting with me again,” says I, “you must be sure to get your wife’s consent to go inside, before we start.”

## JIMMY TOMLIN'S ADVENTURE.

I was often out in the mountains several days at a time hunting for bear and deer, especially when there was snow on the ground. I had just been out on a hunt for two days and come home tired, when in came little Tommy Tumlins and said:

"Brother Mart wants you to go and help him get a bear, which he has been following for three miles."

There was a crust of ice on the snow at that time, and bears would break through, cutting their feet and making them bleed. I said to Tommy:

"I cannot go, for my dogs are in no fix; and, besides, I am in no fix myself."

"Oh, Uncle Johnny," he said, "you must go and help Mart," and begged so hard that I finally told him I would go.

I got up and put on my shoes and leggins and started out with my dogs, having to go up the creek by old Jimmy Tomlin's, Mart's father. I went in to get Jimmy to go with me.

"Gaskins," he said, "I would like to see a bear chase and I will take my dogs and go with you."

I looked at him and thought: "Well, you won't go very far," for he had on an old pair of cotton pants, an old cotton hunting shirt and an old pair of shoes with the soles nearly worn off. I said to him:

“Come on and go. We’ll get that bear sure.”

He called up his dogs and we started. The road, for some distance, was tramped down, making very good traveling. But as soon we left the road and started up the mountain it was so slick that it was almost impossible to get along. I was before the old man and kept looking back to see if he was coming.

Hearing a noise behind me I looked around and there was the old man down on his back. His straw hat was off and his feet were up in the air. He was going the other way pretty fast, cursing and swearing. Finally he straddled a sapling which stopped him. When he had gathered himself up he hollowed to me:

“I am going home.”

“Oh, no,” says I, “Uncle Jimmy you can make it. Try it again,” and I went down to where he was.

We got some farther up this time when the old man’s feet slipped again and away he went, straddling another sapling and cursing worse than ever.

When his dogs heard all the fuss they came romping down upon him and knocked him down. I could hardly keep the old man from hearing me laugh for it was funnier than any bear hunt to me. Finally the old man got up again and says:

“Gaskins the bear may go to h—l; I am going home.”

“All right,” says I, “and take your dogs with you.”

I went on up the mountain and soon found Mart.

“Where’s Dad?” he asked.

“He fell down the mountain,” I answered, “and swore that the bear could go to h—l.”

My dogs were now out of hearing, but we started on. Looking across on the other mountain we saw two of the dogs coming back. I told Mart not to be discouraged, for my old dog would stay with the bear.

The two that were coming back had been crippled the day before and could not run much, but I knew the old dog would never leave the track, so we went on some distance and stopped to listen. We could hear the old dog baying the bear off to the left of us.

We then quit the trail and went off across the mountains in that direction. Finally we came to high cliff and could hear the dog down under the ledge, but could not get to him.

“Mart,” says I, “we’ll go farther around the mountain and find a place where we can get down.”

We started on a run and had only gone a short distance when we met the bear coming up.

“Shoot him, Mart,” I hollowed.

Mart raised his gun, taking deliberate aim, hitting the bear just above the eye.

This only staggered him; but the old dog, who had followed the bear up, caught him by the hind leg and

pulled him down again. The bear soon got loose and started up again.

It was now my time to shoot, but I thought I would wait till the bear got up in good position so that I could shoot him in the heart.

Just as I was about to shoot my two crippled dogs came running up and took hold of the bear. One grabbed his lower jaw and the other her ear.

I fired, but hit him too high up, and this made him just mad enough to kill all my dogs, and I knew he would do it. He wheeled around and took one of the dogs by the head and the other in his hug.

This was more than I could stand. I ran up to the bear and put my gun against him and shot. I then looked around and saw that Mart was about to shoot. But he changed his mind and handed the gun to me, when I ran up and shot the bear again. This made four shots in him, but he was yet killing my dogs."

"Mart, take my knife," says I, "and cut him all to pieces."

He took the knife; but, dog-nab him, he was so excited that he hardly knew what he was doing. He ran up and, raising the knife as high as he could, would plunge it into the bear, saying each time:

"That will do; that will do," until he had struck the bear five times, when it fell over. Mart's eyes were popped out and he looked scared.

I pulled the dog out of the bear's hug. He was alive, but badly hurt. We skinned the bear and left it there until morning. I got home with my crippled dogs about 10 o'clock.

I did not hunt any more for some time. Along in the spring I was out a good deal after bear and wolves, but could never get old Jimmy Tomlins to go with me any more to see a bear chase.

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#### CATCHING THE CUBS.

About the first of May is the time when the old she bear leaves her den with her cubs, which are then large enough to follow. So one spring I told the boys we would go out and try to catch some cubs.

We started out one morning and had not gone very far until we struck a bear track, which we followed for more than a mile and was finally about to give up.

We stopped and I was looking down the point of the mountain when I saw an old she bear get up with one cub. It was too far to shoot so I set the dogs after her. As soon as she saw them coming she picked up the cub in her mouth and started off in a run, and ran about three hundred yards when the dogs overtook her. She then put down the cub and whipped it up a tree, after which she ran on and the dogs after her.

I and my son Thomas ran down to the tree.

“Dad, you kill the cub,” says Tom, “and I’ll run on to where the dogs are fighting the bear.”

I stopped and tied my coat around the tree to keep the cub from coming down. Then I started ahead, but met one of the dogs coming back to the tree where the cub was. I went back with the dog for I wanted to save my cub.

The cub would come down to my coat and stop, but I kept working with it until I finally got a hold. After I had pulled it down I wrapped my coat around it and put it under my arm, holding by the neck with one hand. But it scratched me so that I had to put it down.

I thought then I would tie it but I found that I could not hold it with one hand and tie with the other, and I did not know what to do. It was crying and begging so for its mother that I did not know how soon she would be on to me, but I picked it up and started on, it scratching and clawing me all the while.

Finally I thought of an old camp near by. After I got to the camp I put my cub under a large iron kettle and left it there.

After this I started to find Thomas, but did not go very far before I met him and the dogs.

“Have you got the old bear?” I asked Tom.

“No,” he says, she got away from me.

We then went back to the camp and got the cub. We tied it and had no trouble getting it home.

We went back the next day to look for the old she, but I could not strike her trail. Along in the evening we struck the trail of an old she and her cubs, but it being so late we called the dogs off and went into camp. The next morning we started out before daylight.

We had got back to about half-way where he had left the trail the evening before, when the dogs ran down in a hollow and scared up an old she with her two cubs. She made fight with the dogs.

We all started down on a run toward them, but the boys got there first. Thomas tried to shoot her but his gun wouldn't fire, and Jimmy had just missed her with his revolver when I got to them. I had met the cubs coming up the hollow, but I had let them pass.

The old she caught one of my dogs and hurt him so badly that as soon as he got loose he came running by me yelling.

"Tige," I called, and he came running back to me. "Tige, dog-nab you, take her," and he ran back and took hold of the bear again.

She ran up the hollow, the dogs after her. I had no chance to shoot and she turned and came back toward me.

"Get out of the way!" I called and all the boys

climbed up the bank but Jimmy, who climbed up on a log and shot at the bear striking her in the eye.

This made her madder and she plunged at him and would have got him, but one of the dogs caught her by the jaw.

She turned and went for the dogs, catching one in her hug. She was killing it. I had got to her by this time and placing my rifle against her side sent the bullet through her.

Thomas stabbed her five times with his knife and she fell over dead.

I pulled my dog out of her hug and he was dead also, and the other dogs were badly crippled.

We sent Thomas to the camp after the horses and Jimmy and I began to skin her. Before we were through we heard the cubs calling for their mother.

"We will go after the cubs." says I. We found them.

"Catch one," says I. As soon as Jimmy would get to one and put out his hand, it would turn and fight.

Finally we caught one and tied it and carried it back to the old bear, and finished skinning her.

Next morning we went back and by hollowing like a cub succeeded in finding and catching the other.

But I must go back to the evening before and tell our mishap in getting our meat home.

My horse was foolishly afraid of fresh meat, so I blind-folded him and packed all the bear meat on him besides a large dead turkey which I tied to the horn of the saddle.

The horse led along all right for a mile or two and then I got sorry for him, with such a load on, and blind-folded.

So I took off the blind-fold and started on.

The horse looked back and saw the load on his back and began to rear and plunge so I thought he would kill himself. When he got everything off except the saddle he ran away and we caught him a half mile from where he started. He was so frightened that he trembled all over.

We straightened up the saddle and gathered up our scattered meat, put it in a large sack and tied it on his back with ropes, finally getting it all home. But that was enough for me. I never tried to catch any more cubs, finding it to be a dangerous business.

I sold one cub in a few days for \$15, and the other two in September for \$50.

My best trained dog was now gone and the others all crippled, so I quit hunting till the next fall and winter, raising more dogs for future hunting.

I was always anxious for the time to come when I could hunt again. The baying of the dogs among the hills was a delightful sound to me.

## FIVE SWAMP BEARS.

Late the next fall myself and Thomas went to Clifty to our rock house and camped over night. We had four dogs with us.

During the night I woke up and heard the bears tramping over our cave. Their growling and scraping against the opposite bluff made a terrible noise. The dogs began to growl, so I got up for it was dark and I wanted to keep the dogs quiet and inside with me. I managed to keep them quiet and after awhile the bears went away.

By daylight we had our breakfast and was ready to go after them.

Before we had gone a half mile I looked across to the other mountain and there I saw five bears all standing straight up looking at us, and there was a deep gulch between them and us so we would have to go around to get to them.

"Pap," says Thomas, "what makes them look at us that way."

"They are counting our dogs," says I.

Then we started around the gulch and I kept motioning the dogs across the gulch and finally two of the younger ones crossed and chased the bears over the hill out of sight.

We followed as fast as we could and met the two dogs coming back. They had got up with the bears

and were whipped. The bears were not in sight.

“They are gone to re-inforce,” said I, “and we must re-inforce before we follow them.” So we went home.

The next day a man of the name of Harp got after the same five bears and got two of his dogs killed. They went on into the neighborhood of Kingston, killing several dogs there. The last I heard of them they were thirty miles away and still going, for they were swamp bears and not afraid of as many dogs as could be put after them. They were all old, large fellows and could kill a dog directly.

But I was too smart for them and they didn't kill any of my dogs. My experience in bear hunting had already taught me to not get excited when I saw bears or to rush up on them when there were too many together. I always tried to save my dogs all I could. And then bears, coming from the swamps in the southern part of the state, go in gangs. They will fight anything, so I let them go, thinking the best plan was to let good-enough alone.

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#### AN EXCITING STORY.

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I will now give the reader an excitable story. I was not in it, but it was related to me by the parties themselves and is given by their permission.

James Harp, or Squire Harp, as he was called, was a great deer hunter. It was in the winter of 1868 that Harp struck a bear trail towards Clifty and treed the bears in a den.

He went on after James and Leroy Todd, and found them at dinner, eating back-bones.

“You sit right down there,” said James Todd, jumping up from the table with a bone in his hand; “we’ve got to go and get those bears. I love bear meat better than anything. Why, squire, its the best meat in the world, and now we can have it all winter. I’ve heard old bear hunters say that when a bear was in a cave that way you could go right in and feel all over them and pick out the fattest and kill it with your knife and the others would never move. Eat, squire, and we’ll go at once and get one.”

“I don’t know as I like that arrangement,” says Squire Harp.

“Oh, come, now, don’t go back on us, squire; I will go in and kill the bear. All I ask is for you to carry the light.”

The three men found the den smoking from the breath of the bears.

“Now, I don’t like this,” says Harp, “It looks to me too much like going to death.”

“Oh, no, there not a bit of danger; I’ll go in there first and you needn’t be afraid.”

They had just got inside when Todd cried: "There is a bear coming," and he turned and ran over Harp to get to the hole first.

As soon as he cleared the hole he looked back and saw the bear coming, and then he ran about thirty yards to a tree, when he sat down on the ground and threw his arms and legs about the body of the tree, thinking he was safe. The bear, who was as bad scared as Todd, ran away.

But poor Harp, who had been run over by both Todd and the bear, turned around to go out, when he stepped on an old she, and in an instant she was right up and at him.

His torch light was all that he had to defend himself with. He would strike her in the mouth and face with that as often as she came at him. Then he would jump back and cry: "Oh, Lord."

As soon as the bear got tired of being struck with the blazing torch she turned and ran out of the cave, and Leroy Todd shot her and she fell right there.

The sound of the shot seemed to wake up Jim Todd for he jumped up and ran to Leroy and he says:

"The squire is dead, Leroy. He is dead and we will have to get more help."

"I'm not dead, either," says the voice of the squire from the cave.

So they pulled away the bear, which had fallen in

the mouth of the cave, and let the squire out.

Squire Harp himself said that if both his ears had been cut off that minute he don't believe that he would have bled a drop. The bear had not hurt him, and he had bruised his head and shoulders in jumping back to get away from her.

There were still three bears left in the cave, but they never tried to get them out, but pledged themselves to never go into another hole after a bear. That was the first experience and would be their last.

Now I say I am personally acquainted with these parties and believe them to be truthful and responsible men, but certainly no bear hunters.

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#### A FRUITLESS CHASE.

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About the year 1870, Mr. Dunlap, who lives at Beaver on White River, told me that there was an old bear over there killing his hogs. He wanted me to go over and kill it for him.

"You let me know as soon as you miss another hog," says I, so late one Saturday evening about the 10th of May he came to me and said another hog had been killed by the bear. He wanted me to go right over there then and kill it.

"It's too late this evening, but I'll be there early in

the morning with my dogs," said I. When I went over I was accompanied by Mr. Platner and my boys Thomas and Jimmy. We had four of my dogs, all of them being in good fix.

We had reached a high point along the river, when I saw my old "start" dog throw up his head and begin to scent around.

"There's a bear close about," says I.

We tied the other dogs and let old Start go over the hill, and in a few minutes we heard him give a loud bark. Then we untied the other dogs and away they went, and in a few minutes more they all came back right towards us with a bear which they were fighting.

The bear never stopped until he got down the mountain. Then he stopped and began killing my dogs and soon had two of them hurt so bad they couldn't get up and biting "preacher" across the top of the head so that he left about half of the skull bone naked.

The old dog was all the one left unhurt.

The bear then went on with the old dog after him, and the "preacher" following, but he was so badly hurt that he soon came back.

We followed on all day and late in the evening came up with them, but I could not get a shot and gave it up, and hunted no more until next winter.

“PREACHER” GOES ON THE RETIRED LIST.

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One evening about Christmas Mr. Babbit and Mr. Platner came and told me they thought they had tracked two bears into a thicket and wanted me to go with them. So the next morning I took all of my dogs and they took one, and when we got to the thicket we tied all the dogs except the old “start” dog. We sent him in and stationed ourselves around the thicket. In a few minutes we heard him bark and out they came, but with only one bear.

We then let all the dogs loose and the old dog and the “preacher” caught the bear and were rolling him down the mountain, when the other dogs got there.

They soon had the bear down into the gulch out of sight, but Babbit being nearest to them heard one of the dogs hollow and ran down. They had the bear fast and down in the gulch

Babbit who was right over the bear reached his gun down and shot it. But seeing that the bear had the “preacher” in his hug and that the shot had not killed it he killed the bear with his knife and pulled the “preacher” out of his hug.

When I got there I found the “preacher” bleeding. There was a hole in his breast. We found that the bullet had struck the bear’s shoulder blade and run

around and down his foreleg and into the dog, wounding him.

I was sorry for my dog and took him to my son-in-law, Thomas Clark, who lived near by.

“Make this dog a pallet in the house by the fire and feed him bread and butter until he gets well,” said I.

When the “preacher” got well I put him on the retired list, never taking him out any more. He lived a long time, but never needed or wanted for attention, and finally died an honorable and natural death.

Babbit and I divided the bear half and half. It was nice and fat, but I would much rather saved my dog than to have had all the bear at that time. I was always a great fellow for my dogs, and did hate to loose a good one like the “preacher.” He was the best dog of his size I ever owned and I always thought it was because a good preacher of the name of Joseph Helton gave him to me.

## CHAPTER IX.

## A CATAMOUNT.

One day in the month of September I was hunting horses in the gulch where the street, now called Main or "Mud," lies in the town of Eureka Springs.

The grass and vines were so thick that I could hardly get along. I was leading my dog with a rope.

All at once I was startled by a large catamount raising up in the grass before me. I unloosed the dog, and he ran it under a large shelving rock a short distance away.

I found the dog could only get to the catamount with his head, so I got me a long pole and punched it out so the dog could get hold of it.

He brought it out and then they both reared up like two dogs fighting, and the dog threw it back,

siezed it by the breast and killed it. I was surprised, for I expected to see them fight awhile, and thought that if it got the best of my dog I would help him out, but I was disappointed that time.

After he had killed it I saw near by a nice deer which was partly eaten up, and I knew then it had been watching its meat. This was the cause of its making fight with us.

Not long after that I was going along one day on the side of a mountain. My dog had run ahead of me and was out of sight.

All at once I heard a tremendous noise and my dog yelling. I went as fast as I could go, thinking it was a bear. When I got in sight I saw a large eagle which had its claws fastened in each side of the dog's head and was beating him to death with its wings.

I did not wait to see them fight, but picked up a pine knot and hit the eagle on the head about three times before he let the dog go. Then I beat him to death.

Looking around I found the carcass of a deer, which he had been watching as I had supposed.

I took the eagle home and measured it. It was eight feet from the tip of one wing to the other.

The next fall I found out, or think I did, how the eagle managed to kill the deer.

I was walking along quietly deer hunting when I heard a noise and looked ahead of me. Three deer

were running toward me, with their tongues out, nearly run down.

I thought wolves were after them and waited, hoping to get a shot. As the deer ran by I saw a large eagle swoop down upon one of the yearlings, almost knocking it down.

Following them, I found there were two of the eagles, and first one and then the other would swoop down and strike the young deer on the head. It would try to dodge and then run on.

I followed, expecting to find where one of the yearlings had been killed, but never got up with them. I was satisfied, though, that they did kill one or both before they stopped.

One day in the last of December when there was a heavy snow on the ground I went out to look for my hogs. I had heard that the bears were killing them.

On the side of a rough, steep mountain, about a mile up the creek, I heard a noise above me. It sounded like a large ox walking.

It was a large bear and he came right toward me.

I had my gun but no dog with me.

When he got within thirty steps I fired, aiming at his heart. I expected to see him fall, but he only growled and champed his teeth and started right toward me again.

Now I did not know what that meant. I began to feel scared, and to feel my hat raise on my head. My gun was empty. If I undertook to run I would have certainly killed myself, the mountain was so steep and rough.

I knew what I did must be done immediately, so I went to reloading my gun as fast as possible. I watched the bear, too.

When he got within ten steps of me he stopped again. I raised my gun intending to shoot him through the brain, but my nerves were a little shaky and there was a brush in the way.

I missed his head entirely and shot him in the shoulder, breaking it.

He fell and rolled over and got up with his head the other way and started back. The blood spurted out of his shoulder at every step. I felt good then, sure, and did not try to follow him but went home after my dogs.

I put the dogs on his track and followed him eight miles to Clifty and finally lost him.

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#### THE LARGEST BEAR I EVER SAW.

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Uncle Alah Jackson was living in this part of the country long before I came here. He was an old bear hunter in these mountains and I learned a great deal

from him about hunting bear.

We had several good bear hunts together; although he was getting old he still loved to hunt.

We often camped together and would lay and talk half the night, he telling me about his bear scrapes which were very interesting to me, for I loved to hunt, too, and especially for bears, which were so plentiful here then.

One December myself and one of my boys went out on a hunt for bear. We traveled all day with our dogs but found no bears and started home late in the evening,

Within two miles of home we jumped a deer and I shot it but only wounded it. My old start dog ran it over to White River. We had the other two dogs tied and with us.

We started to follow the old dog and the deer but did not go very far until we struck a very large bear track in the snow.

He had crossed the mountain and seemed to be traveling right on, and we stopped and studied a while hardly knowing what to do. I wanted to get the bear, so we untied the two dogs that we had with us and started them on the bear's track and we followed after them for about a mile before they came up with the bear.

The dogs tried to fight him but he was too much

for them and soon crippled them both so badly that we met them coming back to us before we got close enough to to the bear to get a shot at it.

The bear went on. It was then night and very cold and we were about eight miles from home.

We made a fire by a log and stayed there until morning and then went home.

A few days afterward Uncle Alvah Jackson was out looking for bear and saw the large bear and another smaller one lying at the mouth of their den, sunning themselves.

The bears saw him and ran into their den.

Uncle Alvah did not molest them then but came to my house. I went back with him, taking my dogs along, but when we got to the den we found that the bears had not been out but were still in there.

We stopped up the den and both went home.

After we got home Uncle Alvah told me that he could fix a match that would cause the bears to come right out of the den as soon as they got the scent of it.

“All right; it is dangerous business going into a den after them,” says I, “how do you make the match?”

He said that he would take some rags and mix tallow, pepper and sulphur together and saturate the rags with the mixture. This tied on the end of a pole if set on fire and pushed into the den would drive the bear out.

"I think its a good idea," said I.

Uncle Alvah went home to prepare the mixture and we met at the den the next morning.

We fired the match and pushed it in the cave and in a few minutes out came the large bear.

As soon as he got a good smell of the rags he turned right around and went back into the den and died. We never got a shot at him.

"Now what will we do," says Uncle Alvah.

"I believe Cordell and Saylor will go in if you will give them half of the meat," said I.

"Well," says he, "you get them," and we parted, agreeing to meet at the cave on a certain day.

We went back to the den with Cordell and Saylor and fixed them a light. They went in and found the bear coiled up, and shot him in the head. He never moved. They came out, saying they were sure he was dead when they found him. I could hardly believe he was dead, but they showed me one of his ears they had cut off.

We dragged him out with a rope and skinned him, giving the men the skin. He smelt badly and had been dead for some time. He was the largest bear that I ever saw, and had he been fat would have weighed seven hundred pounds. He measured nine inches across the foot and eighteen inches lengthwise,

which was as far back as he would break the snow in walking.

The small bear was still in the den. We camped there all night to watch for him. There came up a rain storm and we moved back for shelter under a cliff of rocks. Uncle Alvah waked me up, calling:

“What’s the matter with your dogs?”

“It’s the bear,” said I, and so it was.

The water was pouring down everywhere, and we could hear the creek just below roaring terribly. The dogs rushed down that way and I told Cordell and Saylor to go after them. The dogs had stopped at the creek, but the bear as we supposed, had swam across, and we lost him.

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#### WITH UNCLE ALVAH AGAIN.

Some time afterwards Uncle Alvah and his son Thomas were hunting on Clifty when they found a she bear and two yearlings on the side of a mountain. They put the dogs out, but after they had chased the bears a little way they came back.

“I don’t like that,” says Thomas. “I wouldn’t hunt with such dogs.

Thomas went home and Uncle Alvah came down after me.

“We’ll go after them,” says I. “If my dogs was to do me as yours have done I would kill every dog-

nabbed one of them, sure, that's what I'd do."

The next morning we went there, and my dogs soon started an old she and two yearlings. Before they ran two hundred yards one of the yearlings ran up a tree.

I ran on and tried to shoot the bear, but somehow my gun had got out of fix and wouldn't fire. I kept trying, but it would not go, so I sat down and took the lock off, fixing it the best I could. But it would not go.

I got mad and holding up the gun I took sight at the bear and just kept pulling at the lock till it finally fired. I knocked the bear out and soon killed it with my knife.

"Well, you have killed it," says Uncle Alvah, who just then came up.

"Yes," says I.

"Well, Gaskins, there are more of them. Put your dogs on the trail and we'll try to get another."

"No," says I, "I am going home, and if one of my dogs even looks at a bear trail I will take a club to him."

"What's the matter!"

I told him my gun was out of fix and I didn't want to be out after bear without a good gun. He said he could fix it. He took it and soon had it all right.

I was in a better humor and we went back where

the dogs found the trail of the other two bears, and the second yearling was soon treed.

I scared it out of the tree, and after the dogs had rolled it and fought it for awhile I killed it with my knife.

As we were going back to where we had left the first one the dogs found the old she. We ran her about a mile but it grew too dark to shoot and we went to the rock house to spend the night.

As we were dressing the bears we had killed I was going to give the liver to my dogs, when Uncle Alvah said we should keep them ourselves.

“I’m afraid they won’t be good,” says I.

“You let me cook them,” says he.

He made forks out of spice wood brush, and put several slices on each fork, with the slices well salted and with small pieces of fat between them. He then put spice wood buds all through the liver, roasting it before the fire until it was nice and brown. While the liver was roasting he sliced our bread and put it below so the grease would drip on it. When it was done I had the coffee made and we had supper.

It was the best supper that I had ever eaten in camp. I never forgot it, for it was the last supper I ever had the privilege of eating with Uncle Alvah in camp. He did not live very long after that. He was

an old pioneer and a good man who everybody loved that knew him.

I was then left to hunt bears without his advice, but I kept on with my hunting as long as there were any bears left to kill. I believe I am about the only old pioneer bear hunter that is now left alive in this part of the country and I feel that I cannot be here much longer. I hope to go to rest when I am done here.

I always believed that Unele Alvah Jackson went to rest when he died, and have often thought that a history of his early life here, giving his ups and downs, would have been a grand book and one worth reading, for our children and grand children know but little of how many hardships we old pioneers had to go through in the first settling of this country.

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## CHAPTER X.

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### A WILD CHASE.

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I used to hunt a great deal with Mart Tumlin.

We struck a large bear track on Clifty one day and followed it until we came to a thicket, where the dogs jumped the bear and we followed them. We came to a high mountain where the dogs had turned back and the bear gone on. There were tracks in the snow plain to be seen.

We could not imagine what that meant, but on going a little farther we found where the bear had slid or fell over a bluff or precipice. He had fallen, anyhow, a hundred feet. We could see in the snow where he had landed, but he was gone and so were

the dogs. We had to go a quarter of a mile to where we could get down, and had to climb down trees. We discovered that the bear had slid off to get away from dogs which had been pressing him too closely. The dogs had run around and followed him down, when the bear had climbed a large tree and went out on a limb and got on the mountain again, leaving the dogs down there.

But my dogs were too smart to be foiled that way, even if the bear had played a sharp trick on them, for as soon as they found it out they went around on the mountain again and took up the trail.

We had to climb back up again, and could then hear the dogs off to the left, baying the bear, at least a mile away. Mart was ahead, and when he got near the bear he raised his gun.

“Don’t shoot,” says I. “I want to see the dogs fight him a while.”

The bear was on a large white oak tree that was leaning. As soon as he saw Mart coming he started down. My old dog, when he heard me hallow, started up the tree and met the bear about fifteen feet from the ground and grabbed him by the nose.

The dog pulled back and the bear pulled back, and they soon had the bear’s nose stretched out about a foot. The bear whined and begged, but the dog held on. Every time they stopped pulling, I would cry:

“Shake him, Bull; Dog nab him:” The dog would give a twist and pull and the bear would whine. Mart and I stood there enjoying the fun for some time, when I noticed the bear placing his feet on the tree. Then he raised one paw and struck the dog on the head, knocking him twenty feet down the mountain.

Then he went back up the tree and sat down, completely whipped. He never even noticed us, but rubbed his nose, grumbling and whining all the time.

I told Mart to shoot, that the bear would never come down again. The bullet went through his brain and he died almost instantly. We had him, though he gave us an exciting chase.

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#### THE IRISHMAN AND THE BEAR.

Early in the fall of either 1870 or 1871, two men named Baker were hunting deer and killed one. They dressed it where they killed it, leaving the entrails on the ground. The next day, being Sunday, they were walking about with a little Irishman named Coffee, a machinest doing some work for a Mrs. Maasman. He hailed from St. Louis.

The men found where the deer had been and saw that the entrails had been dragged off. They followed finding a bear had dragged them into its den.

Coffee got excited right away. “Is the bear there now?” says he.

“Yes, he is; what shall we do?”

“Go and get Gaskins,” says he. “He’s the doctor. He’ll know what to do.”

He came to my house in a run. “Why didn’t the Bakers kill the bear?” says I. “I told them not to do a thing till you got there,” says he.

I called up my dogs and we were soon there.

“Is the bear right there?” asked Coffee.

“No, he’s way back in the den,” says Baker.

“Then I’ve lied to Gaskins. I thought it was right out there. What are you going to do, Gaskins?”

“Its not my game,” says I. “You fellows can go in if you want to.”

“We’ll not go,” says the Bakers.

Coffee then says to me, “they told me you could go right in a den and feel all over a bear and he wouldn’t hurt you.”

“That’s a mistake,” says I.

I told them to stop up the den and I would find somebody to go in. The next morning my son Sam and I took Cordell and went to the den. Coffee was already there. Sam took a light and went in with Cordell. The bear got scared and started towards them. Cordell was in a tight place and had not much room to shoot, but he got his gun in the best position he could and fired, hitting the bear in the mouth and breaking its jaw. Then they came out. A number

of us were standing back from the mouth of the cave. Coffee was so scared that he did not look as if he had a drop of blood in his face, and could only talk in a whisper. After resting awhile Cordell got another gun and he and Sam crawled back, and shot the bear three times, killing it.

Coffee went wild with excitement. Said he would give fifty dollars for enough whiskey for a jubilee.

After we got the bear out I sold Coffee the skin and feet for five dollars, though he offered me ten.

“Now,” says I, “you can show the people in St. Louis the skin and feet and tell them what a terrible bear fight you had down here.”

“Gaskins,” says he, “the people in St. Louis are not all damned fools.”

The bear weighed five hundred pounds. After Coffee got the skin and feet, he declared he wouldn't take twenty dollars for them, and I suppose if he is living he has never forgotten the killing of that bear in the mountains of Arkansas.

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#### A BEAR CHASE.

I was anxious for a bear chase, there being a heavy snow on the ground. I told Thomas to do the feeding and I would take my gun and go up on the mountain and see if any bear had passed, and if I found tracks we would take the dogs and have a chase.

I walked up the creek and on one of the mountains where Eureka Springs now is and struck a large bear track. I went back home and got Thomas and the dogs and we went back to the tracks and started the dogs on the trail.

In two miles we jumped the bear, which was a very large one. The dogs ran it on to Kings river. Then it turned and came right back across the mountains and gulches. We followed them and sometimes we were out of hearing. They finally came to the hollow which is now Main street of Eureka Springs, and the bear went up a large pine tree just below where the Southern hotel now stands. When we got in sight the bear was walking about on the limbs, growling and teasing the dogs, which were all tired out and ready to give up. We hollered to them to stay with him, and at the sound of the voice every dog jumped to the tree and began to yell as loud as he could.

By the time we got to the Basin spring the bear saw us and started down.

“Shoot him, pap, shoot him,” says Thomas.

“I’ll have to rest before I can shoot, Tommy.” I was out of wind.

The bear came down among the dogs and they soon all had hold of him. He shook them off and ran a few steps and then went up another tree. I stood near the Basin spring and shot him, knocking him out of

the tree. The dogs jumped on to it and I stabbed him with my knife. I made a fire in the Alvah cave, above the basin, and we dragged the bear there and roasted his liver for our supper, enjoying it very much after our long day's chase. We had walked and run eight miles. Next morning we went home and hunted no more that winter.

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#### WOLVES AND PUPPIES.

One evening about the last of May, my brother-in-law Scott told me to go to Uncle Alvah's and get my mares and colts from the range, for the wolves were bad, and had been killing Uncle Alvah's sheep and would kill my colts.

"Why don't Uncle Alvah kill the wolves?" said I.

"He can't find them," says Scott.

"Well, I'll kill them and not bring in my colts."

"Yes, I know that you will kill them," says Scott, "but you had better bring in your mares and colts."

I told him no, but I really intended to go after them. I liked to tease Scott.

Next morning I started with my gun and two dogs—my start dog and old Sharp, who was blind in one eye. After I had gone about a mile I killed a turkey and hung it upon a tree. About a mile farther old Sharp had gone over into another hollow, but Bull, the start dog, was with me.

Suddenly I heard a terrible growl behind me and looked back to see old Sharp and two large wolves snapping at each other. I called old Bull and he wheeled around and saw old Sharp and the wolves, and made for them. He ran right against old Sharp's blind side and scared him so bad that he jumped over the wolves and ran away, clear out of sight, leaving old Bull with the wolves to fight it out. They were too much for him and he started to me, and the wolves snapping after him. This made him so mad that he turned again and began to fight them. I ran up to shoot, but the wolves saw me and ran away. Bull followed them into the hollow and soon began to bay, but before I got far I met him coming back with the old gray wolf right after him.

As he passed I stepped back to shoot, but he threw up his head and the bullet went through his breast. He rolled down the hill, yelling and whining terribly. I told Bull to go after him and soon heard him barking in the hollow. I started on and old Sharp came by me.

“Dog-nab you, go and help Bull,” says I.

He ran on and caught the wolf by the jaw, and they both went over full length. Bull jumped in but the wolf caught him by the nose and made him yell. I could see no chance to shoot, so I plunged my knife through the wolf, nearly breaking the point in the

gravel, and the wolf was soon dead as he could be,

I skinned him and threw the skin on a tree, sending the dogs on to hunt up the others. We found the den about a half a mile on under a ledge of rocks.

I stooped down and looked in and could see the shining eyes, and thought it was an old she wolf with her puppies.

I lay down, trying to get a shot, but the noise made the little puppies come out. Such pretty little things they were; I touched one and they all darted back into the hole.

I stopped up the den and hung my vest up in front of it to scare the old she away, and then went back home.

Next morning myself and boys and all the dogs went back and found the den had not been molested. We made a circuit, hoping to find the old she, but failed.

One of the boys crawled in and got four puppies and we took them home. I killed two and kept one, giving John Scott the other. The boys tried to train the one we kept, but could never teach it to be anything else than a wolf. Before it was half grown it was killing chickens and ducks and Scott's was the same way, and had to be killed. But I had the five scalps and the county paid me ten dollars for them. and I did not have to take my mares off the range.

## SQUIRE FARLEY'S FIRST BEAR.

About the twentieth of November 1872, just as the sun was rising, Squire Farley went deer hunting on Leatherwood creek. He was a very lucky man with deer and small game, but had never killed a bear. On this morning, as he went up Sugar Camp mountain, all at once his attention was attracted to three bears in the bushes, eating acorns. He raised his gun to fire at the largest, but noticed that his gun was not steady and took it down again. The bears had not noticed him.

“It will never do to have the buck ague at this stage of the game,” he said to himself.

And raising his gun he fired at the largest bear, the bullet taking effect behind the shoulder and knocking the bear down.

It rolled down the mountain right towards him, and the other two, which proved to be cubs, followed. Mr. Farley thought he was going to have to fight in close quarters, but the bear rolled against a log, raised up on her hind feet and fell over dead, with the cubs standing beside her.

He loaded his gun, thinking he would get another shot, but the cubs escaped in the brush. Mr. Farley went home after his sled and sent for me.

When we got started, there were seven of us in all the party and nine dogs, and we struck the trail of two

cubs within a mile, and soon routed them out of the brush and vines. The cubs separated. One came towards me, and when it was within fifty yards I shot it through the heart, killing it instantly. The other stopped about a half a mile away and began to box the dogs right and left.

I saw it would be impossible to shoot, for there were so many dogs, so I handed Mr. Farley my gun and told the boys we would have to kill the fellow with our knives.

He was standing on his feet with his mouth open, slapping at the dogs, which were thick all around. My son Sam was stout and not afraid of bear, so I told him to do the killing. He went up and while the bear was turning he plunged the knife into its neck, killing it.

We took the bears to Mr. Farley's and divided up the meat and had a great feast. After which we spun a few good yarns and went home, leaving Squire Farley rejoicing over his first bear hunt.

THE END.





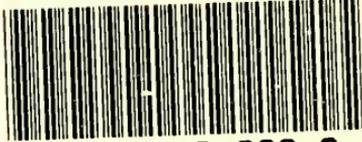








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